

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, April 21, 2022.

Hon. JERROLD NADLER,
Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN NADLER: I am writing to you concerning H.R. 496, Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act, as amended. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that provisions of the bill fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary under House Rule X, and that your Committee will forgo action on H.R. 496 to expedite floor consideration. I further acknowledge that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any future jurisdictional claim over the matters contained in the bill that fall within your jurisdiction. I also acknowledge that your Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this or similar legislation moves forward, and will support the appointment of Committee on the Judiciary conferees during any House-Senate conference convened on this legislation.

Lastly, I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the Congressional Record during floor consideration of the bill. Thank you again for your cooperation regarding the legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with you as the measure moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

GREGORY W. MEEKS,
Chairman.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a bill that I am grateful to have introduced with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), my longtime friend and codel colleague, the Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act.

It is important that we first acknowledge the heinous escalation by the war criminal Putin, as he continues to wage a one-sided, full-scale war in sovereign, democratic Ukraine. Putin's war in Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea have dragged on for 8 years. The human toll is staggering.

Prior to the full-scale invasion, fighting in the Russian-occupied regions had already claimed over 13,000 Ukrainian lives, including thousands of innocent civilians. That is even before the current invasion.

Another casualty of Russian aggression in Ukraine has been the attack on religious freedom. Russian occupation authorities in Crimea continue to persecute and intimidate the minority Christian, Muslim, and other religious groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Putin's puppets in Crimea during the duration of their occupation subjected them to kidnappings, torture, forced psychiatric examinations, and imprisonment. Muslim Crimean Tatars have been sentenced to serve lengthy terms in Russian prisons on the entirely baseless charge of terrorism.

Minority religious groups in the area of eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Putin proxies have also been forced to flee in order to escape the oppressive conditions. The religious persecution in Ukraine being committed at the

hands of the Putin authorities is self-destructive and must be stopped.

Throughout American history, the United States has worked tirelessly to advance religious freedom and protect religious minorities around the globe. The bill follows that strong tradition by accomplishing the following:

One, making clear that it is the policy of the United States to never recognize the illegal attempted annexation of Crimea by Russia or the separation through the use of military force or recognition of independence of any portion of Ukrainian territory;

Second, it helps ensure that war criminal Putin and his cronies are held accountable by considering any official involved in carrying out severe violations of human rights in sovereign Ukrainian territory by applying the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Three, additionally, this legislation requires a determination of whether to designate Russia as a country of concern for religious freedom.

We cannot allow these grave violations to continue. It is vital that the United States continues to be a leader in advancing international religious freedom around the world.

This bill not only brings international attention to the religious persecution being committed in the territory of Ukraine that Putin illegally occupies or controls through illegal armed groups it commands, but also ensures that war criminal Putin and his thugs are held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that the United States continue its tradition of advancing religious freedom and human rights around the world.

This bill brings accountability to the Putin regime for its crimes of oppressing religious minorities as it illegally occupies sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Additionally, it is so critical that the United States continue to send a clear message that it will never recognize Putin's illegal occupation of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

Mr. Speaker, as ranking member of the Helsinki Commission, I especially recognize our dear friend, the late Chairman Alcee Hastings for championing this issue and the Helsinki Commission for prioritizing human rights and holding war criminal Putin accountable for his continued violations of human rights and religious liberty in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

I thank my friend and colleague from South Carolina. He is a gentleman and

a champion of religious freedoms around the world. This is an example of what this institution, and we Americans can do together when we find common ground and set our minds to it in the face of such aggression and risk around the world.

Putin's flagrant violations of the basic human rights of Ukrainian civilians on Ukraine's sovereign territory are disturbing, and they are unacceptable. Freedom of religion is a moral imperative that the United States must continue to strive to defend as we support the people of Ukraine through these incredibly trying and horrific times.

This is personal to me. My own family fled Russian persecution during the pogroms of the late 19th century to come to this extraordinary country. Little could they have imagined that I would be standing here with you, my friend from South Carolina, talking about religious freedoms and doing everything we can as a country to preserve and protect those all around the world. That is what it means to be an American, not just here, but all around the world.

We must take action where we can, including by ensuring that the President considers all regions where Russian influence is determining future development funding for the Nation. I trust my colleagues will join me in supporting this terribly important bill to defend these freedoms all around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PHILLIPS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 496, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

ASSET SEIZURE FOR UKRAINE RECONSTRUCTION ACT

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6930) to authorize the confiscation of assets subject to United States jurisdiction of certain foreign persons, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6930

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress as follows:

(1) The President should take all constitutional steps to seize and confiscate assets under the jurisdiction of the United States of foreign persons whose wealth is derived in part through corruption linked to or political support for the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin and with respect to which the President has imposed sanctions.

(2) The President, by means of instructions, licenses, or other regulations as may be promulgated and in a manner consistent with due process of law, should confiscate any property or accounts subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, valued over \$2,000,000, and belonging to Russian energy companies or to foreign persons whose wealth is derived in part through corruption linked to or political support for the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin and with respect to which the President has imposed sanctions.

(3) All rights, title, and interest in any property so confiscated should vest, upon the terms directed by the President, in such agency or person as the President may designate from time to time, and upon such terms and conditions as the President may prescribe.

(4) Such interest or property should be held, used, administered, liquidated, or sold, by such agency or person and such designated agency or person should perform any and all acts incident to the accomplishment or furtherance of these purposes.

(5) The President should use all liquidated funds for the benefit of the people of Ukraine, including for the following:

(A) Post-conflict reconstruction in Ukraine.

(B) Humanitarian assistance.

(C) United States government assistance provided to the security forces of the government of Ukraine.

(D) Provisions to support refugees and refugee resettlement in neighboring countries and in the United States.

(E) Technology items and services to ensure the free flow of information to the Ukrainian people in Ukraine, including items to counter internet censorship by Russian authorities, to circumvent efforts to shut down internet or communication services by Russian authorities and bolster the cybersecurity capabilities of Ukrainian Government or non-governmental organizations.

(F) Humanitarian and development assistance for the Russian people, including democracy and human rights programming and monitoring.

SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.

The President shall establish an interagency working group, which shall be headed by the Secretary of State, to determine the constitutional mechanisms through which the President can take steps to seize and confiscate assets under the jurisdiction of the United States of foreign persons whose wealth is derived in part through corruption linked to or political support for the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin and with respect to which the President has imposed sanctions.

SEC. 4. REPORT ON STEPS AND AUTHORITIES.

Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, on behalf of the interagency working group, shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report about the steps taken by the interagency working group to accomplish the steps laid out in section 2, a report that includes any recommendations to impose additional energy-related sanctions on the Government of Russia, and a re-

port on any additional authorities the President needs to take such steps.

SEC. 5. EXPANSION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT.

Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall submit to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a report, which may be submitted in classified form if necessary, that contains a justification for any determination of whether or not, in addition to the sanctions imposed pursuant to Executive Order 14024 (86 Fed. Reg. 73; relating to blocking property with respect to specified 11 harmful foreign activities of the Government of the Russian Federation), imposing sanctions on 328 members of the Russian State Duma, a determination as to whether remaining members of the Duma and the Russian Federation Council, which includes officials who may be involved in corrupt and other sanctionable activities, who voted on February 22, 2022, to recognize the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), as well as the Russian Federation Council in its entirety, should be subject to sanctions under the such Executive Order.

SEC. 6. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PHILLIPS) and the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

□ 1330

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 6930, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6930, the Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, we have long known the Russian oligarch class is an important pillar of President Putin's brutal and corrupt regime. These Russian oligarchs have been able to enrich themselves and use their wealth to consolidate power within their country and increase their influence abroad.

As President Putin continues in his unjustified and premeditated full-scale invasion into Ukraine, the United States must do all that it can to identify and sanction his cronies bankrolling this brutality.

The Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act, as amended, takes an

important step in this direction. The bill expresses the sense of Congress that the President should confiscate property subject to U.S. jurisdiction worth over \$2 million belonging to Russian energy companies or Russian oligarchs whose wealth is derived from corruption or by support of President Putin. It expresses the sense that such property should be held, used, administered, liquidated, or sold, and that any funds gained from such sale should be used to benefit the Ukrainian people.

Furthermore, this legislation would also create an interagency working group to determine the proper constitutional mechanisms through which this could be achieved.

The luxury villas and fancy yachts and private airplanes of Putin and his cronies are tainted with the blood of the Ukrainian people. Their corrupt assets should be seized and should be used to rebuild Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Sadly, on February 24, war criminal Putin launched an unprovoked, unjustified murderous war of aggression against the people of Ukraine.

The humanitarian toll has been devastating. More than 5 million refugees have fled Ukraine. More than 7 million are believed to be internally displaced, and we have seen on our screens the heart-wrenching images of Putin's horrific war crimes in Bucha, Mariupol, and elsewhere.

The economic toll for Ukraine is no less devastating. The World Bank has forecasted that Ukraine's economy could contract by 45 percent this year with a worst-case scenario seeing its GDP shrink by 75 percent.

The Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said last week during a visit to Washington, that Ukraine would need around \$5 billion a month in budgetary support as long as the war continued and then roughly \$600 billion for a broader rebuilding effort.

To rebuild this country, the Ukrainian Prime Minister requested not only additional financial support from the United States and its allies and partners, but also the transfer of Russian assets that have been frozen by the global sanctions regime to Ukraine.

The U.S. must answer this call.

The resolution we are considering urges the President to establish an interagency working group to determine the constitutional mechanisms through which the United States could not only freeze but seize the assets of Russian oligarchs within the United States if this property was derived through corruption linked to the Putin regime.

The liquidated funds are to be repurposed for the benefit of the people of Ukraine, including post-conflict reconstruction when the Ukrainians win, humanitarian assistance, and assistance for the security forces of the Government of Ukraine.

I was grateful to colead this legislation with our colleague, TOM MALINOWSKI of New Jersey. Thanks to an amendment from our colleague, PETER MEIJER, the bill also urges the administration to expand sanctions on members of the Russian Parliament, the дума, who voted in support of recognizing the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic, which are illegal fabrications. This vote served as part of Putin's pretext to Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against the people of Ukraine. Anyone who supported that vote must fall under U.S. sanctions—full stop. The administration needs to seriously consider how we can use the frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine fight and continue winning, then rebuild its country. Therefore, I urge all colleagues to join me in supporting this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MEIJER).

Mr. MEIJER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act, which I was proud to help introduce with my colleague, Congressman MALINOWSKI.

This bill sends a strong and clear message of support to the Ukrainian people and a clear message to Putin and his cronies that their ill-gotten assets are no longer welcome in the United States.

The Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act encourages the administration to take necessary steps allowed by the Constitution and existing laws to seize Russian assets valued over \$2 million and repurpose them towards post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in Ukraine.

It also includes my amendment that aims to expand sanctions on members of Russia's Parliament who took the reckless and illegal vote to recognize two breakaway states in the Donbas and authorize Putin to use military force in Ukraine.

Although the Biden administration sanctioned 328 дума members who voted on February 15 for a resolution calling on Putin to recognize the Ukrainian breakaway states, the so-called Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic, it has still not imposed similar sanctions on the remaining дума members and the 154 members of the Federation Council who voted just one week later to authorize Putin's senseless war in Ukraine.

These Russian politicians, as well as the oligarchs who so comfortably store their assets on U.S. territory, play a role in Putin's illegal war, and they all deserve to be punished. Our bill ensures that they do not escape accountability for their complicity in the atrocities against Ukraine, which has left thou-

sands of civilians dead, and many millions displaced.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this critical and urgent bill.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, rather than financing war crimes in Ukraine and multi-million-dollar yachts and real estate for Putin's cronies, this money could be much better spent on urgently needed humanitarian aid and weapons for Ukraine.

This makes sense for the people of Ukraine as well as for the American taxpayer. I, therefore, urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, the Asset Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act, as amended, sends a statement to Vladimir Putin and his cronies that the U.S. Congress will make sure the United States is not a safe haven for their corrupt assets.

The legislation makes it clear that the President should take measures to seize and confiscate their assets subject to U.S. jurisdiction and use the proceeds from such sales to help the Ukrainian people, all while protecting and preserving the rights enshrined in our Constitution.

I thank Representative MALINOWSKI for authoring the bill, and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PHILLIPS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6930, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROY. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

GEORGIA SUPPORT ACT

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 923) to support the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 923

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Georgia Support Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.

Sec. 2. United States policy.

TITLE I—ASSISTANCE PROVISIONS

Sec. 101. United States-Georgia security assistance.

Sec. 102. Report on United States democracy and governance assistance to Georgia.

Sec. 103. United States cybersecurity cooperation with Georgia.

Sec. 104. Enhanced assistance to combat Russian disinformation and propaganda.

TITLE II—SANCTIONS PROVISIONS

Sec. 201. Imposition of sanctions on persons complicit in or responsible for serious human rights abuses, including right to life in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia occupied by Russia.

TITLE III—DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS

Sec. 301. Determination of budgetary effects.

SEC. 2. UNITED STATES POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to—

(1) support continued development of democratic values in the Republic of Georgia, including free and fair elections, an independent and accountable judiciary, public sector transparency and accountability, the rule of law, and anticorruption efforts;

(2) support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders;

(3) support Georgia's capacity to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity from further Russian aggression or encroachment on Georgian territory in light of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine;

(4) support the right of the people of Georgia to freely determine their future and make independent and sovereign choices on foreign and security policy, including regarding their country's relationship with other nations and international organizations, without interference, intimidation, or coercion by other countries;

(5) support Georgia's Euro-Atlantic and European integration;

(6) not recognize territorial changes effected by force, including the illegal invasions and occupations of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation;

(7) condemn ongoing detentions, kidnappings, and other human rights violations committed in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia forcibly occupied by the Russian Federation, including the recent killings of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhazoria, Davit Basharuli, and others in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia; and

(8) support peaceful conflict resolution in Georgia, including by urging the Russian Federation to fully implement the European Union-mediated ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008, and supporting the establishment of international security mechanisms in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, all of which are important for lasting peace and security on the ground.